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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7945th meeting
Monday, 22 May 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bermúdez	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Woldegerima
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016) (S/2017/357)

Fourteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2017/371)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning Iraq

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2299 (2016) (S/2017/357)

Fourteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2017/371)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/371, which contains the fourteenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013).

I now give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

Mr. Kubiš: The days of the the so-called caliphate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq are numbered, thanks to the bravery and patriotism of the Iraqi security forces, including the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga and the tribal volunteers, as well as the endurance of the Iraqi people. The liberation of Mosul is imminent. Operations are shifting to remaining areas and pockets of Da'esh presence, including along the borders with Syria.

The 22 March meeting of the international counter-ISIL coalition in Washington, D.C., was a clear reminder that we must maintain a dual focus on both the challenge of defeating Da'esh and on the post-liberation stabilization and rehabilitation phase in Iraq. Support and assistance for Iraq from the international community, including its regional partners, are indispensable.

I am encouraged by the continuous commitment of the Iraqi National Alliance to achieving a national settlement. I also acknowledge the long-awaited submission of the Iraqi forces coalition's vision of the historic national settlement, along with a confidence-restoration initiative. On 17 May, in Baghdad, the broadly inclusive Turkmen forum adopted a common Turkmen vision for a national settlement based on mutual respect of equal rights and responsibilities within a united Iraq. Other groups, civil society and tribal elements continue to share their respective visions on how and on what principles to rebuild post-Da'esh Iraq.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is committed to helping Iraqi parties achieve an inclusive national settlement based on several guiding principles: respect for the Iraqi Constitution and the unity of Iraq, citizenship with equal rights and responsibilities, equal participation in the political process, the rejection of and fighting against terrorism, and the rejection of sectarianism, inter alia.

National reconciliation can succeed only if it reflects the needs and expectations of the people, not only the politicians. Women and youth, who make up more than half of Iraq's population, are a key constituency. Under the title "Iraq: Youth and Coexistence", UNAMI convened seven separate forums across the country bringing together more than 750 young participants from all Iraqi provinces.

The project concluded in a national conference in Baghdad on 20 May that called for separating religion from politics, enforcing the secular character of the State, putting an end to the sectarian quota system through legislation, reforming educational curriculums for the promotion of the Iraqi identity, patriotism and the spirit of tolerance, and empowering women, especially young women.

The imminent defeat of Da'esh must provide an urgent impetus to address the concerns of minorities and enable their safe return to their homes. Minorities in Iraq continue to face existential challenges and need special attention.

The return of all displaced persons to liberated areas must be at the top of the list of priorities of the Government of Iraq. I would like to express my continuing concern over the delay in the return of displaced persons to areas liberated long ago, such as Jurf Al-Sakher or places in Diyala governorate. In

addition, many hundreds of alleged disappearances that reportedly took place last year in Al-Sejar and Saglawiya in Anbar and at the Razzaza checkpoint, or this year in Taremia, remain unresolved. Moreover, there are instances of disappearances as a result of vetting processes in the liberated areas. Lack of progress on the issue of return could affect demographic composition and would undermine efforts towards national settlement.

I urge Baghdad and Erbil to leverage the reservoir of goodwill accumulated in their joint battle against Da'esh and urgently engage in high-level political dialogue and negotiations on the key outstanding issues in the political, economic and administrative fields. Lack of dialogue and progress on issues such as a functional federation based on partnership or the implementation of article 140 of the Constitution, concerning disputed boundaries and territories, will increasingly create problems and tensions.

Senior officials in the Kurdistan region of Iraq have declared their intention to hold in 2017 a referendum on the future status of the region. They stressed that the objective of the plebiscite would be to show the world the will of the people, rather than to immediately declare independence. Also, the authorities in Kirkuk have indicated their willingness to take part in the planned referendum on the future status of the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

The Turkish armed forces have relentlessly continued to conduct air strikes on suspected positions of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Iraq. For the first time, on 25 April, they conducted an air attack on PKK targets in the Sinjar area, Ninewa governorate. Turkish leaders declared that the strikes would continue in order to deny the PKK another sanctuary and to push back threats to Turkey's national security. Prime Minister Al Abadi condemned the attack, warning that these types of activities undermined regional efforts against Da'esh.

Respect for the rule of law in Iraq remains weak. Kidnapping and hostage-taking, irrespective of criminal or other motives, have increasingly become a problem. A prominent Shia cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, warned that the number of kidnappings would increase in future after, as he said, "shameless militias" take control of liberated areas. On 11 May, the national intelligence cell headed by Prime Minister Al Abadi discussed the issues of kidnappings and organized crime, acknowledged the interconnection between terrorism and organized crime, and took additional measures to prevent and resolve such acts.

Ensuring justice and accountability remains crucial if community and national reconciliation is to succeed in the post-ISIL period. While the international community needs to vigorously pursue initiatives that aim to promote accountability for international crimes committed in Iraq by Da'esh and hopes to get support from the Iraqi Government, the United Nations in Iraq has been undertaking work with a range of partners to promote accountability at the national level.

A complex electoral calendar looms in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan region, for 2017 and 2018. Of primary importance is the holding of elections for the new Iraqi Parliament within its constitutional term in April 2018, as a precursor of the creation of the new Government that will steer the country in the post-Da'esh period.

Delays and uncertainties as regards the electoral, legal and institutional framework and preparations are increasingly of concern and cast doubt on whether it will be possible to hold provincial council elections in September 2017 in a way that would ensure credibility and inclusiveness as well as wide participation.

Since military operations to retake Mosul began, in mid-October, 700,000 people have fled their homes, approximately one fifth of whom have been able to return home. An estimated 200,000 people are still in ISIL-controlled parts of the city, where they are reportedly suffering extreme shortages of food and water, and are at risk from bombardment and being caught in the crossfire.

The United Nations Development Programme's Funding Facility for Stabilization continues to expand also, in Ninewa. More than 230 projects are under way in eastern Mosul, including the rehabilitation of water-treatment plants, electrical substations, schools and health-care facilities. One hundred and thirty projects are under way in the Ninewa plains, including in hard-hit minority communities.

Allow me to now turn to the fourteenth report of the Secretary-General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives (S/2017/371).

On 3 May, I travelled to Kuwait. While acknowledging the reinvigoration of the file, my

interlocutors reiterated their regret at the lack of tangible results. They also voiced pragmatic ideas on the way forward.

In two days, Iraq will be hosting, for the first time in 14 years, the forty-fourth session of the Tripartite Commission. Echoing the press statement issued by the Council in July 2016, I would urge the Government of Iraq to fulfil its international obligations under this file. I also wish to commend Kuwait for the support and understanding that it has consistently shown towards the challenges faced by the Government of Iraq over the years.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Kubiš for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Kubiš for his briefing.

First, we must express our support for the Government of Iraq in its ongoing efforts to defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). To that end, as the fight to rid Iraqi territory of ISIS fighters continues, we commend the Iraqi Security Forces for taking measures to protect civilians while fighting ISIS in Mosul. The United States is fully committed to the protection of civilians in its counter-ISIS efforts and looks to all parties fighting ISIS to make the same commitment.

Today, I would like to touch on three main subjects: the humanitarian crisis, building stability for the future, and accountability for ISIS.

The United States remains deeply concerned at the grave humanitarian conditions in Iraq. Daily displacement rates are increasing, and more Iraqis are vulnerable now than at any time before in the recent conflict. The humanitarian situation is expected to deteriorate until families are able to re-establish their livelihoods. We urge donors to contribute to the 2017 United Nations humanitarian response plan, which is currently just 28 per cent funded. Funding the Plan is critical to assisting those in need.

We applaud the efforts of the Iraq Government, United Nations agencies and other humanitarian agencies aimed at assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) by increasing humanitarian-relief capacity. We urge Government authorities, including those in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, to ensure ready access to IDP camps as the international community continues to build capacity. The United States encourages the United Nations to work closely with both the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to continue efforts towards the voluntary return and reintegration of those displaced. We likewise appreciate the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) aimed at supporting the Government of Iraq's dialogue with minority populations across the country.

Turning to the future, the United States remains committed to a united, federal and democratic Iraq, as defined in the Iraqi Constitution. The stakes for achieving lasting stability in Iraq will remain high, and success will depend not just on the outcome of the military campaign, but also on the steps Iraq and the international community take in the coming days, months and years. Iraqi-led, United Nations-supported stabilization efforts are as critical as ever to promoting local reconciliation and preventing the resurgence of ISIS in liberated areas. We welcome UNAMI's continued work towards these goals and we commend Mr. Kubiš' efforts on behalf of the Iraqi people.

Good governance is also central to enduring reconciliation. As such, we urge the Government of Iraq to continue its progress in implementing political, economic and social reforms. These reforms are key to bringing an end to corruption and protecting the civil rights and religious freedom of all Iraqis.

Finally, we support the United Kingdom's proposal for the creation of an international investigative body that will assist the Government of Iraq to investigate, document and gather evidence of atrocities perpetrated by ISIS and other extremist groups. We must hold these perpetrators accountable. Comprehensive efforts towards accountability and reconciliation will prove critical to Iraq's achieving its full potential, which we all recognized as great, with long-term peace, stability and prosperity for all Iraqis.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Kubiš for his briefing today. His mission is carrying out an important function at a critical time for Iraq, supporting the Government as it seeks to spread stability and security across the country.

At the outset, I want to commend the brave men and women of the Iraqi security forces. Thanks to their bravery and sacrifice, Da'esh now controls less

than 12 square kilometres of territory in Iraq. Soon it will be none. Mosul will be liberated, and Da'esh's so-called caliphate in Iraq will have been brought to an end. For us, the Secretary-General makes clear in his report (S/2017/357) that, until that happens — until Iraq is free from the terrible scourge of Da'esh — families will continue to be subjected to horrific violence at the hands of these fanatics. We therefore cannot relent in our efforts. We must do everything we can to help them.

The United Kingdom commends Prime Minister Al Abadi for putting the protection of civilians at the heart of Iraq's military operations. It is critical that the Iraqi Security Forces continue to do so throughout the final and most difficult stages.

The United Kingdom is playing its part and is supporting the Iraqi security forces through the global coalition against Da'esh. We have contributed almost $220 million in life-saving aid to vulnerable displaced families across the country. The United Kingdom has also pledged almost $12.5 million to support United Nations funding facility for immediate stabilization to support newly liberated areas. We encourage other donors to contribute to the humanitarian response plan for Iraq.

The conflict has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. That is why we are also providing $1.2 million to help implement Iraq national action plan on women, peace and security. As Da'esh's caliphate comes to an end, Iraq will need political reconciliation and reform. The United Kingdom welcomes the efforts of Iraq's political leaders aimed at promoting national reconciliation, and we urge UNAMI to continue to facilitate these efforts. We also welcome the support Iraq's neighbours have provided in this time of need and urge them to continue their solidarity and friendship.

As the Security Council knows too well, security and stability will count for little without accountability. That is why the United Kingdom launched, along with Iraq and Belgium, a global push to bring Da'esh to justice. As we have said before, time is of the essence. We must start gathering evidence of its crimes before it is lost. Newly liberated areas hold a wea'th of evidence against Da'esh that the international community must help Iraq collect and preserve. The United Kingdom has been working closely with the Government of Iraq and international partners to achieve this end.

I welcome the discussions we have had with a Government of Iraq on this issue and Prime Minister Al Abadi's recent and significant statement made at the end of March, which called for the Security Council to adopt a resolution to prosecute Da'esh's crimes against civilians. This message was delivered during the Secretary-General's visit to Baghdad. We believe the United Kingdom proposal is the clear way forward for the Council to answer Prime Minister Al Abadi's call. We look forward to working with our Iraq colleagues so that the proposal can be finalized as soon as possible. As the global community works together to defeat Da'esh, we must work together to hold it to account.

As the Council lead on resolution 2107 (2013), the United Kingdom welcomes the Secretary-General's latest report on the issue of missing Kuwaiti persons and property (S/2017/371). Unfortunately, despite the strengthening of bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait, there has been no progress on returning Kuwaiti property this year. I want to extend our support to all parties in their efforts aimed at achieving tangible progress over the next year.

Ultimately, we all want to see a stable, secure, prosperous and unified Iraq. The United Kingdom stands ready to work with the Government of Iraq and our in international partners to build the better future all Iraqis want and deserve. UNAMI will play a critical role in this effort. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I thank the Special Representative and his staff for their work at such a significant point in Iraq's history.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened carefully to Special Representative Kubiš' briefing. We welcome the active and dynamic efforts made by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Russia is tied to Iraq historically. Because of our friendship, we support with political and practical steps those of the Iraqi Government being taken to regain control over territory taken by terrorists, ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country. We would like to see the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) eradicated as soon as possible. In view of the close relationship between Iraqi and Syrian terrorists, the possibility of a complete victory over ISIL in Iraq, independent of its destruction in Syria, hardly seems likely. In that regard, international counter-terrorism operations should be thoroughly coordinated with the aim of presenting a broad front in the fight against terrorism. The Russian Federation is ready to cooperate with efforts in that regard. We

welcome Baghdad's use of bilateral communication channels with its regional partners and its positive efforts to maintain good relations with neighbouring States. It is essential to ensure that those involved in combating terrorism in Iraq respect its sovereignty and coordinate their actions with the authorities in Baghdad.

Despite the Iraqis' limited successes in combating terrorism, the situation remains tense and the Government of Iraq needs more attention and assistance from the international community. Terrorists are still present in a number of cities and governorates. Civilians are being used as human shields and terrorists are using chemical weapons increasingly often. We insist that such crimes must be objectively investigated, including by harnessing the potential of a joint investigative mechanism in order to help the Iraqi Government put an end to this threat. At the same time, however, we realize that stability cannot be restored in Iraq by force alone. Along with providing humanitarian assistance, it is vital that the country's entire administrative, economic, housing and socioeconomic infrastructure be rebuilt. Prime Minister Al Abadi's Government is already accomplishing a great deal in that area, but international assistance is still needed here too.

The key to achieving post-conflict normalization in Iraq is promoting a national dialogue and creating the conditions that can bring every religious and ethnic group into that dialogue with the goal of restoring a peaceful existence in Iraq for people of all faiths. We believe that the assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq in establishing that dialogue through support for national reconciliation initiatives launched by the various Iraqi political forces and their transformation into a single comprehensive settlement plan for Iraq should remain a priority for the Mission. We commend the spirit and conscience of its staff as they continue to work in conditions that are seriously threatened by terrorism and the ongoing war with ISIL. Iraq needs international assistance, and there is still much to do to normalize its situation.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We appreciate Special Representative Kubiš's update on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. Kazakhstan greatly values the efforts of the Mission and the United Nations system to provide critical services to the people of Iraq amid serious and challenging threats.

At the outset, we would like to commend the Iraqi army and security forces for their dedication and fearlessness in fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in western Mosul on a daily basis. We salute the fighters who are defending Iraq under the State's command and that have now become a part of the country's armed forces under the Popular Mobilization Commission Law. For Iraq's safety and peaceful future, there can be no weapons outside the Government's control.

Kazakhstan supports the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. The international community must reinforce Government efforts to enhance public services and promote inclusive governance. We would like to emphasize that long-term recovery must be based on addressing the Government's role in providing services and sound security arrangements for all communities. It is equally essential to reduce corruption, decentralize federal authority, promote national and local reconciliation and bring the perpetrators of crimes to justice. We therefore commend Prime Minister Al Abadi for affirming his Government's commitment to achieving those objectives by working with all Iraqis, including women and young people. We also stress the crucial importance for a peaceful future for Iraq of the provincial and district council elections announced by the Council of Ministers, as well as the parliamentary elections scheduled for April 2018. We therefore support all legitimate demands for electoral reform.

My country underscores the need for national unity in Iraq. We believe that national reconciliation should remain high on its political agenda, and the nationwide discussions of the Historic Settlement Initiative of the National Alliance, as well as the relations between the federal Government and regions, are therefore exceedingly important. We particularly emphasize the importance of military cooperation between Iraq's national and regional security forces and call on the regions to stay committed to constructive dialogue with Baghdad.

Kazakhstan underscores the importance of protecting Iraqi civilians and providing full and immediate humanitarian access to United Nations agencies and their partners. We emphasize the need for support for the return of internally displaced persons and public safety in liberated areas. The recommendations for reconstruction, the return of displaced persons and the fair treatment of detainees must now be speedily and effectively implemented. We support the statement on 24 March by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq underscoring the responsibility of all parties to protect

civilians against the use of human shields and the indiscriminate use of firepower, and we condemn ISIL for using such methods.

We welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2347 (2017), which condemned the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage and the looting and smuggling of cultural property during armed conflicts, notably by terrorist groups, and which should help to facilitate the retrieval of artifacts smuggled out of Iraq by ISIL.

All Member States, and Arab countries above all, should affirm their commitment to a partnership in Iraq that is aimed at rooting out terrorism and promoting security, political, economic, cultural and educational cooperation. We therefore endorse the outcome of the Summit of the League of Arab States held in Jordan in March, and the expressed will of Iraq's Arab counterparts to fight ISIL and provide humanitarian, economic and development assistance. Regional cooperation between Iraq and Arab States is fundamental, and the Summit statement affirmed that the stability and territorial integrity of Iraq are cornerstones of Arab security.

Lastly, we must not hesitate to support the Special Representative's engagement with all sectors and communities in Iraqi society in order to advance an inclusive political dialogue and improved delivery of public services with the aim of achieving sound statehood and national reconciliation in post-ISIL Iraq. That, we hope, will result in a new vision and hope for Iraq in accordance with the Historic Settlement Initiative presented by the National Alliance.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank Uruguay for convening today's meeting and Special Representative Ján Kubiš for his briefing.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Al Abadi, the Iraqi Government has made progress in promoting reform of Government institutions, facilitating national reconciliation, fighting terrorism, improving the humanitarian situation and advancing economic development, and China commends all those achievements. We hope that Iraq will be able to achieve national security and stability as soon as possible and that the Iraqi people will be able to lead peaceful, tranquil lives at an early date.

At present, Iraq is still dealing with an array of political, economic, humanitarian and counter-terrorism challenges. The international community should continue to give greater attention to Iraq, enhance its engagement in the country, support all the parties involved in staying committed to resolving their differences appropriately through political dialogue, support the Iraqi Government in promoting national reconciliation throughout the country and support a continued role for the United Nations in providing good offices and coordination.

Since its establishment, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has played an important role in supporting the Iraqi Government in promoting an inclusive political dialogue, national reconciliation and reconstruction and coordinating international assistance. China supports the work of Special Representative Kubiš and appreciates the efforts of UNAMI. We hope that the international community will continue to support UNAMI in the implementation of its mandate.

China welcomes the Iraqi Government's efforts to maintain domestic stability. China supports the international community's efforts in that country by providing Iraq with assistance to fight terrorism. In the broader context of maintaining stability in the Middle East, the international community should enhance its coordination, adopt unified standards and respond forcefully so as to prevent terrorist organizations from threatening the region and beyond.

China appreciates Iraq's ongoing efforts to improve its relations with Kuwait and other regional countries, and encourages Iraq to work with relevant regional countries to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue and consultations. At the same time, China hopes that those countries will fully respect Iraq's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, and contribute to its stability and development.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Kubiš for his briefing and for his dedication and energy in leading the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) as it seeks to fulfil its important mandate in what remains a very challenging environment. The recent suicide attacks in Baghdad and Basra remind us once again that the fight against terrorism and violent extremism continues and must be one of our foremost priorities.

We reaffirm our support for Prime Minister Al Abadi, and we welcome the continued progress made by the Iraqi forces in the Mosul campaign, with the assistance of the coalition against Islamic State in

Iraq and the Levant and thanks to the continued positive coordination between all the various units on the ground.

The humanitarian needs in and around Mosul remain unprecedented and are increasing, given the ongoing large-scale flows of internally displaced persons from the old city. We commend the United Nations and its partners, as well as the Iraqi authorities, for their remarkable work in providing emergency assistance and shelter quickly and effectively. Italy will continue to support their efforts. We remain extremely concerned about the many innocent civilians still trapped in areas controlled by Da'esh militants, who continue to use them as human shields and prevent them from escaping. It is therefore crucial that security forces maintain their focus on minimizing civilian casualties and upholding international law during their conduct of military operations.

The reports on the continued enslavement and sexual abuse of women, especially Yazidi women, by Da'esh are also appalling. We welcome the commitment of the Iraqi authorities to addressing the issues of conflict-related sexual violence by ensuring the full implementation of the joint communiqué signed with the United Nations last year. We will continue to provide financial support to psychosocial-assistance programmes for victims. Accountability for those acts, as well as for the many other heinous and systematic war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Da'esh, is a priority. Prime Minister Al Abadi's call for a Security Council initiative in that regard is an important step forward. Italy stands ready to work with all partners to advance the cause of justice and prevent impunity, while keeping in mind the importance of national ownership.

As the military defeat of Da'esh in Iraq draws closer, we must not forget that the fight against terrorism is long-term and requires a strategic and preventive focus, as well as the determination to address the root political causes of the terrorist phenomenon. The unity of purpose that was developed in the fight against Da'esh is an opportunity to strengthen national reconciliation. The concept of universal Iraqi citizenship based on democratic participation and human rights offers a compelling route out of religious and sectarian intolerance and tribalism, and towards national reconciliation.

In order to prevent the resurgence of Da'esh, the focus must be on providing stability in liberated areas. As a coalition leader in the training of Iraqi police forces, my country attaches the highest importance to that objective. An effective and professional police force that ensures security and promotes the rule of law by forging a solid partnership with local communities will be essential to avoiding the resurgence of the terrorist threat.

Our Carabinieri have already trained more than 7,200 local and federal police units, and efforts are underway to increase that capacity. Furthermore, Italy is ready to engage with the Iraqi Government in order to preserve and consolidate the results achieved thus far with a view to broadening security-sector reform efforts. That includes specific training on the protection of cultural heritage and the prevention of illicit trafficking of artefacts.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for mentioning Council resolution 2347 (2017) in his report (S/2017/357). That resolution, a joint initiative of France and Italy, will provide a helpful tool for integrating the cultural dimension into post-conflict recovery efforts.

Stabilization also means ensuring adequate socioeconomic conditions in liberated areas so that returning IDPs can see hope for the future in their communities of origin. Italy supports the excellent work being done by the United Nations Development Programme in coordination with the Iraqi authorities. We also reaffirm our appreciation of the zero-tolerance approach to corruption. Achieving results on political reform is equally crucial. We encourage the Iraqi authorities to make progress on a legislative package aimed at good governance, including an updated framework to ensure fair and transparent provincial and parliamentary elections.

Success in advancing the reform agenda will be key to building momentum towards national reconciliation among the various ethnic and religious groups in Iraqi society. Italy will lend its support to an inclusive political process, under full Iraqi ownership and facilitated by UNAMI, leading to a national settlement where all ethnic and religious components can find their place. In order for reconciliation efforts to succeed, they must also address the role and status of Iraq's minorities. Those groups are an integral component of the country's history and society. We are closely monitoring the situation of each community in Iraq, and

they have repeatedly expressed to the Iraqi authorities their hope and ours that equality, mutual respect and freedom of religion will be guaranteed for all groups and confessions. That principle should apply at both the national and the local levels, especially in Mosul and Ninawa, where good governance and encouraging inclusion and coexistence will be crucial.

Italy's commitment to Iraq's long-term peace and stability is steadfast. As the Secretary-General underlined during his visit in March, this is an historic moment for the country, where all stakeholders in the international community, including neighbouring countries and regional partners, must come together in the spirit of solidarity to help Iraq chart its path towards a stable, democratic and prosperous future.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš for his informative briefing. I also commend him for his tireless efforts to achieve national reconciliation and stability in Iraq.

Before I begin my statement, Japan strongly condemns the terrorist attacks in Baghdad and Basra. I would like to express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims, and we pray for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Japan supports the Government of Iraq, which is standing on the front line in the fight against terrorism, especially against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Following the liberation of eastern Mosul, Iraqi security forces, with support from the combined joint task force, are recapturing western Mosul. We are encouraged to hear that the completion of that operation is within reach. Today, I would like to focus on the protection of civilians, the humanitarian situation and national reconciliation.

First, the protection of civilians is an immediate challenge that all parties in Iraq must address, particularly in the context of the liberation operations. Approximately 200,000 people are living in ISIL-controlled areas of western Mosul. Japan supports the Iraqi Government's commitment to placing the protection of civilians at the centre of its military operations. The procedures and tactics of military operations should always be designed to minimize the impact on civilians, based on lessons learned from past operations. Furthermore, all parties, including the Iraqi security forces and the Peshmerga, should bear in mind that human rights abuses simply lead to further enmity and violence. Any human rights abuse, whether it be against Shiites, Sunnis, the Yazidi minority or others, is totally unacceptable. It benefits nobody in Iraq except the terrorists. The protection of civilians is not merely an obligation. It also decreases the motivation for reprisals and is paramount to sustaining peace.

Secondly, the humanitarian situation in Iraq is a serious challenge in both the immediate and the long terms. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 11 million people in Iraq are in need of humanitarian assistance, with 3.1 million people internally displaced. The humanitarian situation is particularly severe for people displaced by the fighting, including nearly 678,000 people who have been displaced from Mosul.

Japan applauds the United Nations and all humanitarian workers in Iraq for their tireless efforts in extremely difficult circumstances. Japan has been a steadfast supporter of humanitarian and stabilization assistance in Iraq, including through a $100 million contribution announced in January. That sum is already being dispersed through various international organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme, to support the rapid rehabilitation of key infrastructure and livelihoods in newly liberated areas. Japan is firmly determined to continue such support. Japan calls on the international community to continue its robust support for Iraq.

Finally, national reconciliation is the most critical condition for a peaceful and stable Iraq. The operation to liberate Mosul is ongoing, but it is not too early to discuss the post-liberation phase. Without real national reconciliation, peace cannot be sustained in Iraq. The unity shown by the Iraqi people in combating Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) must be further strengthened during the post-ISIL phase.

We welcomed the visit by Secretary-General Guterres to Iraq in March. I particularly appreciated that he participated in serious discussions on national reconciliation. Iraq's efforts with regard to national reconciliation have not yet achieved sufficient results. Japan calls on the parties in Iraq, including representatives of political parties, religious leaders and local community leaders, to make every effort to promote national reconciliation.

The role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is also crucial in supporting national reconciliation efforts by the Iraqi people. I thank Mr. Kubiš for engaging actively with the Government,

other political leaders and civil society. I particularly commend the "Iraq: Youth and Coexistence" initiative. Investing in the future through youth is an approach that Japan has taken in several countries in need of reconciliation.

Japan will continue to strongly support Iraq and UNAMI in their efforts to achieve national reconciliation. We look forward to seeing tangible results.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We express our gratitude for the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/357) presented by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Ján Kubiš, and convey our strongest support for the implementation of the mandated activities.

Furthermore, we appreciate the important work being carried out by UNAMI in fulfilling its mandate and the dialogue and coordination that it has implemented to encourage the strengthening of the peace process in Iraq.

We recognize and encourage the courageous and determined struggle that the Iraqi security forces are carrying out against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), while prioritizing the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. We underscore that, as the terrorist group is driven out and populations are liberated from its control, the deployment of United Nations humanitarian assistance and its reaching those who need it most can be ensured.

We note with concern that to date, according to the report of 15 May issued by the World Health Organization, since the beginning of counter-terrorism operations in Mosul in October 2016, more than 650,000 persons have been internally displaced and more than 12,000 have been wounded as a result of the military campaign in that region. Furthermore, according to the Secretary-General's report, during the period from February to April alone, 908 civilians, including men, women and children, have died, thereby raising the total number of the conflict's casualties to more than 80,000.

We are extremely concerned about the weapons capability that ISIL has developed and the terror tactics that it has been deploying — carrying out drone attacks against civilians, using improvised explosive devices and using innocent civilians as human shields. In that regard, we reiterate our strongest condemnation of all acts of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, wherever, whenever and by whomever they are committed. Similarly, we condemn the cowardly use of children and women as human shields in the strongest terms, and reaffirm the need for all States to combat that practice through all means available in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and other obligations under international law.

While constantly respecting the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Iraq, the Plurinational State of Bolivia recognizes the efforts and will of the Iraqi people to achieve a historic political and social agreement that will finally lead to the establishment and consolidation of peace. In that regard, we look forward to the holding of elections, and we hope that the electoral calendar and the legal mechanisms necessary to implement that calendar will emerge through the consensus of all parties and stakeholders for the benefit of the population in general.

Furthermore, we entrust the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to support and accompany that process in the best way forward. In the same vein, we welcome the support expressed by the League of Arab States at its Summit meeting held in Jordan on 29 March, at which it stated that Iraq's stability and territorial integrity are fundamental foundations for the security of the entire Arab region.

We also appreciate the recent efforts of the Iraqi Government to identify Kuwaiti citizens who might have been buried on Iraqi soil and to identify and return property taken during the conflict. We highlight the constant and active cooperation that Kuwait and Iraq have developed so as to fulfil their international commitments.

Finally, we call on the parties involved to find a way to enable the Iraqi people to achieve reconciliation and definitive peace through a process led by and for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me first thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report (S/2017/357) before us today, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his detailed briefing to the Security Council. We appreciate the work that Mr. Kubiš and his team are doing on the ground, often in very challenging circumstances. We also welcomed the recent visit by the Secretary-General to Iraq.

I would like to begin by expressing our strong support for Prime Minister Al Abadi and the Government and the people of Iraq at this critical juncture for the country. The offensive against Da'esh in and beyond Mosul is a fight not only to reclaim Iraqi territory, but to defeat an enemy that is a threat to us all. For that reason, Sweden is stepping up its contribution to the global coalition against Da'esh.

In responding to an ideology that is devoid of any decency or humanity, it is imperative that we uphold the principles and values that we share and for which we are fighting in this struggle. In the context of the current offensive, that means ensuring that civilians are protected. The humanitarian situation in the remaining part of western Mosul is gravely concerning. We commend the humanitarian response carried out to date by the Iraqi authorities, the United Nations and its partners. We emphasize the importance of continued respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians during the final difficult phase of the liberation of Mosul. We are also concerned by the presence of armed actors in and around camps for internally displaced persons and emergency shelters, which compromise their civilian character.

As the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq has made clear, significant additional humanitarian needs are likely to arise before the end of the Mosul operation, and the end of the operation will not be the end of the road. Major stabilization efforts will be needed for a long time to come. Sweden is contributing both to the humanitarian response, as well as towards post-Da'esh stabilization, through the funding facility of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). We call upon all States Members of the United Nations and other partners to show solidarity with Iraq and to contribute financially to the humanitarian and stabilization efforts.

The period ahead will require strong leadership from the Government, supported by the international community and with the continued attention of the Security Council. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has the potential to continue to contribute significantly to preventing a relapse into conflict by strategically focusing its efforts and resources. Let me therefore turn to some of the key challenges to sustaining peace in Iraq after the Da'esh offensive has been completed.

First, reconciliation will be critical to building a stable Iraq and preventing future conflicts. Strong Iraqi leadership will be required to help bring the many initiatives currently under way together, within a joint plan and with tangible proposals to build confidence among the various parts of the Iraqi population. We encourage UNAMI to continue to deepen its reconciliation efforts and its coordination within the United Nations family, with other initiatives and with Iraqi stakeholders. Reconciliation must be inclusive in order to be successful. In that context, the UNDP initiative aimed at increasing the participation of civil society in reconciliation deserves our strong support. In addition, constructive engagement by regional and international actors will be crucial to such reconciliation efforts.

Building a new future for Iraq will require recognition of the past, however difficult that may be. Accountability will be critical to reconciliation. Sweden is supportive of initiatives aimed at strengthening accountability for violations of international law and crimes committed throughout the conflict. It is also essential to strengthen the Iraqi legal system, and we encourage international partners to consider how they can support such efforts. We also encourage UNAMI to increase preventative diplomacy so as to facilitate dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil. In that regard, we echo the Secretary-General's encouragement to political leaders in Baghdad and Erbil that they should engage in constructive dialogue on outstanding issues.

Secondly, building institutions that are inclusive and equitable must be a priority in the coming period. UNAMI has an important role to play in advising and assisting the Iraqi authorities in strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities. Freedom of expression is an important element of a functioning democracy. We are therefore concerned by the recent reports of the disappearances of political activists and journalists. Building a security sector that is at the service of the whole of Iraqi society will also be critical to future stability. The ongoing security-sector reform work is encouraging, and we hope that the European Union can enhance its engagement in support of long-term civilian stabilization and strengthen its support for the security sector in Iraq in the near future.

Thirdly, as the Secretary-General has made clear, gender equality is central to efforts to recover from conflict. We welcome the establishment of the Women's

Empowerment Directorate and urge the Government to finance and implement the objectives set out in the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). More must be done by UNAMI to increase women's participation in reconciliation and governance post-Da'esh.

Finally, we call upon the Iraqi Parliament to swiftly adopt electoral laws and hold provincial and parliamentary elections. In that context, we emphasize the importance of transparency in the work of the Independent High Electoral Commission.

In conclusion, the Government and people of Iraq now stand on the cusp of liberating the last parts of their country from the tyrants of Da'esh. After liberation, they will then need to turn their attention to reconciliation and to building an Iraqi State that represents all Iraqis. That will take commitment and determination. It is important that we in the international community continue to support them in that endeavour.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to express our condolences to the Government and people of Iraq with regard to the recent heinous terrorist attacks in Baghdad and the southern province of Basra.

We also wish to thank Special Representative Mr. Jan Kubiš for his update.

I want to commend the Iraqi security forces and the international coalition against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for their efforts to liberate Mosul. We hope that the end of the operation is near and that local civilians, who suffered enormously under the monstrous rule of ISIL, will finally be freed. The recent statement of the military spokesperson of the Joint Operations Command instils much needed confidence, as he declared that Da'esh had been driven out of almost 90 per cent of western Mosul.

It is appalling that ISIL keeps resorting to using civilians as human shields. We therefore reiterate our call that the protection of civilians should remain the top priority for the Iraqi security forces and the coalition, even if it means a slowdown in military advances. To prevent more losses among civilians, no effort should be spared in reaching out to them and providing them with vital information on developments on the ground, identifying escape routes and ensuring transparent screening procedures.

Another worrying trend that requires our attention is that, since the beginning of the operation in October last year, the number of internally displaced persons near Mosul has reached 670,000 persons and 200,000 more could flee the city in the coming days. We are therefore concerned that, if such a trend continues, there will be no more space in the camps, most of which are already full. That requires prompt action, and we want to commend the Government of Iraq and all humanitarian partners for their efforts to transfer people to other camps located further from Mosul. I hope that UNAMI, with the support of the international community, will continue assisting the Iraqi Government in mobilizing the resources necessary to address the challenges mentioned.

Ukraine is encouraged by the news that Iraqi stakeholders are tirelessly working on the national reconciliation process. It is commendable that the Iraqi Forces Coalition put forward the Historic Settlement Initiative, and the National Alliance put forward the National Settlement Initiative. Iraq should unite its people, regardless of their ethnicity or religious beliefs. Only inclusive national reconciliation efforts can heal the wounds that the country has sustained and help to achieve a lasting national settlement.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Jan Kubiš for his briefing and for his outstanding work in the field. France reiterates its support for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and thanks the Mission and the Secretary-General for the most recent report (S/2017/357), which was issued a few weeks ago.

Like previous speakers, I would like to address three points: the security situation, the humanitarian situation and the political situation.

First, on the military front, France commends the courage and the determination of the Iraqi forces. With support from the coalition, they have won decisive victories against Da'esh, which has lost almost two-thirds of the territories that it controlled at the height of its expansion. In Mosul, in particular, Iraqi forces have made a significant breakthrough since the start of the offensive in the western districts. We also welcome the launch of the operation by the Iraqi army against Da'esh in the so-called 160-kilometre area aimed at securing Rutba.

Those successes further reinforce the importance of being demanding and vigilant in the humanitarian field at all times, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians. France reiterates its commitment to ensuring

that all forces operate under the strict control of the Iraqi authorities and welcomes the steps taken by the Iraqi Government to make the protection of civilians a priority when planning operations, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The most recent advances by the Iraqi security forces to retake control of Mosul have sparked a large wave of displaced people. Every effort should be made to assist those people. France is very concerned about the plight of civilians trapped in Mosul and stands with the Iraqi authorities to continue to mobilize the international community.

I wish to reiterate in the strongest terms our condemnation of the violence and abuses committed by Da'esh, including the use of civilians as human shields. Every effort should be made to facilitate the sustainable and voluntary return of civilian populations, including persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, where security and development conditions permit. The dignity of these people and, beyond that, the maintenance of diversity and ethnic and religious pluralism in the region, are at stake. Council members are aware that France is committed to the Paris action plan. That plan was submitted by France and Jordan at the International Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, which was held in Paris on 8 September 2015, and for which the first follow-up conference thereto will be held in Madrid on Wednesday, 24 May.

We support humanitarian and stabilization actions on the ground in order to provide the displaced populations with satisfactory living conditions and, where possible, to encourage their return to their towns and villages of origin. The return-assistance projects currently being implemented focus mainly on demining, socioeconomic recovery and the resumption of basic public services, based on an integrated and geographically targeted logic.

I would also like to refer to the fight against impunity, which is an essential component of the mandate of UNAMI. It is now urgent to gather and preserve evidence as soon as possible so that the authenticity of the objects is protected and subsequently that those objects be transferred and examined by the competent court when the time comes. France will support efforts in that vein, in support of the Iraqi Government. The Prime Minister, Mr. Haider Al Abadi, has called on the Security Council to act. We must shoulder our responsibilities. There can be no lasting peace without justice.

Given the magnitude of these challenges, the work of the United Nations and its partners, in conjunction with the Iraqi Government, must be commended. They organize and provide humanitarian assistance under these difficult conditions, and make it possible to host civilians fleeing the fighting in emergency facilities. Priority should also be given to strengthening the already considerable stabilization efforts undertaken by the Iraqi authorities and the United Nations Development Programme in areas freed from the yoke of Da'esh.

Alongside those efforts, cultural heritage, as the representative of Italy recalled, must also be protected. That cannot be neglected in view of the extent of the destruction observed in Iraq. We must exercise utmost vigilance to combat all trafficking and to make use of all the tools at our disposal, in particular resolution 2347 (2017), which we submitted jointly with Italy, and which the Secretary-General references in his report (S/2017/357).

Beyond the emergency, we must also and above all now prepare for the future in order to avoid any security or governance vacuum. That includes an inclusive governance policy plan for Mosul and its region. Indeed, winning the war is not enough. Sustainable peace must be established.

The total and lasting defeat of Da'esh relies on a comprehensive, political and inclusive solution that speaks to the aspirations of all segments of the Iraqi population, with respect for both its diversity and the unity of Iraq. There is an urgent need for the political, institutional, economic and social reintegration of all segments of society, especially Sunni Muslims, without which chaos will only return. We welcome the progress that has already been made and call on the Iraqi Government to accelerate the adoption and implementation of reforms that encourage national reconciliation. We also call on that Government to establish inclusive governance at the national and local levels and to put in place local security forces that are accepted by the population. Our support for Prime Minister Al Abadi is essential to his ability to overcome these immense challenges in a tense pre-electoral atmosphere.

Lastly, we encourage Erbil and Baghdad to continue their dialogue, which, at the political level,

has made it possible to define the modalities of an agreement for operation in Mosul operations; to resolve differences between them; and to take the first steps toward a sustainable solution, with full respect for the unity of Iraq. Given the breadth of these challenges, our collective and continuous support to the Iraqi authorities is indispensable.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for introducing the report on the situation in Iraq (S/2017/371), but also for his tireless efforts for peace and stability in that country.

With respect to the security situation in Iraq, the delegation of Senegal welcomes the notable progress that has been made in the fight against Da'esh, including in the western part of Mosul. Those strides are certainly a reflection of the courageous efforts and the determined efforts made by the valiant Iraqi army, with the support of local players as well as the Global Coalition to Counter Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, in order to defeat the terrorist organization while prioritizing the protection of civilians.

Along with the achievements, in particular military, that we have seen within the framework of the fight to eradicate that terrorist group and its underlying ideology, my delegation is of the view that we must take urgent and appropriate measures to provide humanitarian assistance to the population in need, in favour of national reconciliation and dialogue, the fight against corruption, and for a virtuous and inclusive Government without, of course, neglecting the holding of credible elections, both at the provincial and legislative levels, and accountability. Fortunately, we are pleased to be able to point out the efforts of the highest Iraqi authorities.

In that regard, I have primarily in mind the President and of the Prime Minister, Mr. Al Abadi, and their efforts to encourage national reconciliation and dialogue, including visits to Iraqi Kurdistan where, besides post-Da'esh reconstruction, important exchanges have taken place on international and regional elections, as well as the relations between the two Governments. In that context, we believe it important to strengthen cooperation, specifically within the context of the ongoing operation in Mosul, between the Iraqi armed forces and the Peshmerga, while continuing to place a priority on the protection of civilians.

Furthermore, we invite the international community to continue to provide humanitarian assistance, primarily with respect to the financing of the humanitarian response plan, which was launched in Brussels in December 2016. An estimated $985 million is needed to respond to the needs of the 6.2 million vulnerable Iraqis, among which there are many persons that have been displaced, in particular, since the beginning of the operation in Mosul. In that regard, I would like to highlight the particularly difficult fate of children and to condemn the atrocities that terrorists carry out, including rape, summary executions, as well as forced conversions, in particular of Yazidis, and the use of chemical weapons. Those actions could constitute war crimes.

I would also like to condemn the use of civilians as human shields, as well as the targeted killings that Da'esh carries out, actions which go against international humanitarian law and human rights law. The perpetrators of those crimes must, of course, be held accountable.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes the important action carried out by the United Nations Development Programme to achieve stability and progress in Iraq, in particular in zones that were under the control of Da'esh. I would also like to take this opportunity to launch an appeal for contributions for the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization, which needs additional funding of $500 million. It should be recalled that, thanks to the Facility, 500 projects are under way, in particular in Mosul and in Ninawa.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing. We affirm our full support for the Special Representative in shouldering his responsibility, and for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in its efforts to promote security and stability in the country.

We welcome the great victories of the Iraqi forces in the past few months to liberate Iraqi territories from the control of heinous terrorist organizations. This could not have happened without the coordination of all Iraqi forces and their agreement to work hand in hand to put an end to this scourge, which threatens the security and stability of Iraq. We also value the efforts of the Iraqi

Government, which attaches importance to protecting civilians during the current military operations to liberate Mosul. We call on the Government to continue to adopt this approach, especially as the fight moves to highly populated areas, in order to put an end to civilian casualties.

As the end of the fight to liberate Mosul approaches, we reaffirm that eliminating terrorism, ensuring sustainable peace and promoting stability in the country requires adopting a comprehensive approach that goes beyond military and security dimensions. It must also include political, economic and social dimensions as well. Egypt therefore welcomes the efforts of the international community to consolidate stability in Iraq, especially the work of the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization.

We stress that achieving stability in the liberated areas requires, in addition to basic development projects, ensuring the safe and voluntary return of refugees to their homes in a way that protects their dignity and does not alter the demographic composition of the different areas as it was before the conflict erupted. This will ensure that no group is marginalized at the expense of another. It is also important to adopt a comprehensive approach to governing the liberated areas that meets the aspirations of the citizens and promotes stability.

We must continue to support Iraq's economic reform and development efforts, especially in the light of the next phase, because rebuilding the liberated areas will be a great burden on the Iraqi economy. We therefore support holding a donor conference to mobilize the necessary international support help Iraq at this turning point. We would like to see efforts in Iraq aimed at reaching comprehensive national reconciliation — in which all Iraqi stakeholders are included and none are marginalized — succeed. Throughout history, Iraq has always drawn its strength and stability from diversity and harmony. Therefore, we reaffirm that achieving reconciliation through a genuine dialogue among all Iraqi stakeholders to address the root causes of terrorist ideologies is vital for ensuring lasting stability and security in Iraq. We also highly value the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

In conclusion, I would like the stress that Egypt firmly believes that the strength and stability of Iraq lie in its unity and sovereignty. We reject any foreign interventions in Iraqi internal affairs, especially interventions that fuel sectarian strife and division among Iraqi stakeholders, as that breeds extremism and terrorism and causes suffering for Iraqi people.

The people of the region have been paying a high price for terrorism and extremism. In that connection, Egypt condemns the Turkish air strikes on northern Iraq. That is an unacceptable violation of Iraqi sovereignty and cannot be justified under any circumstances. It will only complicate the regional situation and thwart our efforts to fight terrorism.

Mr. Woldegerima (Ethiopia): We express appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Iraq (S/2017/357) and the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). We also join others in expressing sympathy and solidarity with the people and Government of Iraq on the recent terrorist attack.

We have been following the recent developments in Iraq. The fight against terrorist and violent extremism remains an important priority and we welcome the progress made by the Iraqi Government, the Peshmerga, the Popular Mobilization Forces and local fighters, with the support of the international coalition, in dislodging the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from western Mosul following the liberation of the eastern part of the city. We appreciate the coordination between the Iraqi security forces and other forces, which has been indispensible for the progress achieved recently, and we believe this will remain very critical in completely defeating ISIL. This kind of coordination will also have meaningful impact, not only in fighting against terrorism, but also in tackling other serious political and security challenges in the country.

The significant advances in the fight against ISIL has not been without its challenges. The humanitarian situation, particularly the situation of displaced people, and a significant number of civilian casualties should be of concern. With regard to the alleged use of chemical weapons, we take note of the views expressed by the Iraqi Government and the ongoing work by the World Health Organization, together with the Iraqi Department of Health and civilian protection workers, to make sure that people who may have been exposed to chemical agents were identified and treated.

As the report of the Secretary-General noted, it is women and children who are bearing the brunt because of the ongoing fighting. The protection of civilians is of

paramount importance and we reiterate our appreciation of the Government's commitment in prioritizing the protection of civilians in the Mosul operations. We hope that the relevant United Nations agencies and others will do everything possible to deliver much needed assistance to those displaced by the operation in close cooperation with the Iraqi Government.

The return of civilian administration and the resumption of basic services in the liberated areas will be vital in restoring normalcy and ensuring stability. We take note of the efforts being made towards inclusive political dialogue and reconciliation in Iraq. We hope these efforts will contribute to addressing sectarian and political divisions and to fostering unity in the country. In this regard, we appreciate UNAMI's support to these endeavours.

Finally, the recent visit of the Secretary-General to Iraq and his meeting with the country's leadership was indeed important in conveying a message of solidarity, as Iraq continues to fight terrorism and to address the multifaceted challenges it faces. We support the call that he made to all the Iraqi political stakeholders to engage in a broad-based and representative national dialogue aimed at achieving sustainable peace and reconciliation. It was a most appropriate call he made for the Iraqi crisis has continued for too long.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his thorough briefing. I would also like to offer our condolences to the representative of Iraq, his authorities and the family members of the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in his country.

Uruguay acknowledges the arduous efforts being carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in close coordination with the Iraqi Government, in fulfilling a very important and effective task in order to address the different emergencies that have been affecting the country for several years.

Iraq continues to face many enormous humanitarian, political, economic and security challenges, but today the main challenge remains without doubt the fight against terrorism. For that reason, we support the significant efforts made by the Government of Iraq in the fight against the serious threat represented by the terrorist group Da'esh for its sovereignty, territorial integrity and the security of its entire population — a threat that also affects the Syrian Arab Republic and to which no country today is immune, since the crimes perpetrated by that group and associated individuals and entities do not recognize any borders.

We agree with the need expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/371) to find an appropriate mechanism to ensure accountability for the horrendous crimes committed by Da'esh in Iraq, which include war crimes, crimes against humanity and possibly even genocide. We trust that unlike what has happened, unfortunately, thus far in Syria, the Council will be able rapidly to reach a consensus in order to investigate and prosecute these crimes, including the possible use of chemical weapons.

We reiterate that the fight against the terrorist scourge must be carried out within the framework of international humanitarian law and human rights law and must take place within the United Nations in order to prevent atrocities similar to those committed by these groups from happening again. However, it must be made clear that military operations in themselves will not be eliminate the threat of terrorist in Iraq. Iraqi political leaders must work in order to overcome their divisions and historical mistrust with a view to achieving a broad agreement on national reconciliation that would close the chapter on so many years of suffering for the Iraqi people as a result of deep sectarian and religious divisions.

A topic to which Uruguay attaches particular importance is the formulation of policies aimed at promoting the empowerment of women. In this respect, we call upon the Iraqi Government to move forward in promoting and defending the rights of girls and women and to promote gender equity, strengthen political participation for women and address the critical problem of sexual violence in conflict as a tactic of war and an act of terrorism.

With respect to Mosul, the humanitarian situation of the civilian population remaining in that town and of those who were able to escape continues to be very difficult. The military operations to take the city have resulted in one of the greatest humanitarian crises of our times, and it is far from over. We are concerned by the situation of the hundreds of thousands of civilians

who remain trapped in Mosul, in particular the most vulnerable, such as women and children, and the report that they are being used by Da'esh as human shields, yet another sign of the group's cowardice and total contempt for human life.

In such a complex context, we continue to urge the Iraqi authorities to comply with their declared goal of prioritizing the protection and the security of civilians in this offensive against Da'esh and to coordinate with United Nations agencies the broad-ranging response necessary to address the humanitarian emergency that it has caused. Repairing civilian infrastructure, the normal delivery of services and the gradual return of displaced persons to their homes should be priorities after the liberation of Mosul, which is on the horizon.

Likewise, it should be clear that the fight against terrorism does not end with taking back Mosul. The discovery of mass graves allegedly containing thousands of bodies reflects the scope of the horrors perpetrated by Da'esh in Iraq and Syria in recent years. Despite the defeats that they have suffered recently and the significant reduction of the territory under its control, Da'esh has shown that it has a significant ability to survive, with its fighters using for an escape route to Syria the porous border between the two countries, a border it has controlled for years. The battle of Mosul should not be the end of the war against terrorism but, rather, an important milestone that would make it possible to consolidate the progress that we have achieved thus far.

We will need an even greater coordinated effort by Iraq and the anti-ISIL coalition in order to defeat once and for all that criminal group, which never was and never will be a State, but is simply a band of intolerant killers whose only motivation is to destroy, using the most cruel methods imaginable, everything that does not reflect their extremist beliefs.

To conclude, with respect to the matter of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals as well as the looting of Kuwaiti property during the first Gulf War, we note the positive cooperation between both countries and encourage the Iraqi Government to step up its efforts in order to comply with its international obligations and to clarify these issues as soon as possible.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Marzooq (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to congratulate the Republic of Uruguay on its assumption of the presidency of the Council this month. We thank the Mission of Uruguay for all the efforts it exerted and that of the United States of America for their efforts during that country's presidency of the Council last month.

I welcome the briefing of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Ján Kubiš, and the efforts of his team, and we assure him of our full support.

Iraq is ushering in a new stage in its just war against the terrorist gangs of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This requires providing Iraq with all the support and cooperation necessary to meet the challenges of the post-ISIL stage. This is important, as we suffer from financial constraints owing to lower oil prices. Hence my Government has developed a comprehensive vision based on its priorities, including the economic, social and security dimensions, that serves the interests of Iraqi citizens. I would like to sum this vision up in the following points.

First, the focus must be on restoring security, stability and basic services, and enabling internally displaced persons to return to their homes and take part in the process of post-Da'esh rehabilitation and reconstruction. This is in addition to providing care to the families of the wounded and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and the rehabilitation of society to end the culture of hatred and violence and erase all reminders of the presence of ISIL. Every national effort must be made to achieve these humanitarian and national goals.

Second, it is important to ensure a commitment to respect for others and coexistence with those from different religious, sectarian and ideological backgrounds. This requires respect for the sanctity of houses of worship as a basis for intercommunal reconciliation.

Third, we cannot allow the return of the negative trends that prevailed in Iraq at the pre-ISIL stage. That stage was marked by strong sectarian tension and was not in the best interests of my country, and it allowed Da'esh to take control of cities and governorates in my country. Hence we must commit to this course, which enhances citizenship, unity and cooperation. We should never allow Da'esh or any other terrorist criminal groups

to return. We must monitor liberated cities and prevent new terrorist cells from surfacing in those areas.

Fourth, it is important to establish relations of good-neighbourliness with regional and neighbouring countries. We must make independent decisions as Iraqis, and our positions should not be held hostage to the interests of others.

Fifth, the right to carry arms must be exclusive to the State, and all other such instances must end. There must also be respect for the judiciary and the rule of law across the board.

Sixth, we must continue to fight corruption, as it is the greatest incubator of terrorism and crime.

Seventh, State institutions should not be forums for political intervention. There must also be power-sharing to ensure justice and equal opportunity, with reliance on effective, specialized personnel who are able to work independently and with professionalism.

The Government of Iraq commends the various Iraqi forces — the Iraqi Army, the local police, the Popular Mobilization Forces, the Peshmerga and the tribal forces — for the major sacrifices they have made as they have worked together with the assistance of the international coalition. Thanks to them, we were able to emerge victorious and liberate Mosul. We liberated the portions of the city on the left bank of the Tigris. The operations to recover the portions of the city on the right bank of the Tigris, 90 per cent of which has already been recovered, are ongoing, as planned. We have made the protection of civilians our priority, while terrorists have been using them as human shields.

The various authorities in the liberated areas are working towards a return to normal life by de-mining those areas and otherwise preparing for the return of IDPs. We have started to provide basic services so that residents can resume their normal lives.

We call upon the international community to participate in the efforts aimed at rebuilding and rehabilitation in the cities that were severely damaged. My Government understands the nexus between sustainable development, peace and security, and we are working, with the assistance of the United Nations, particularly with the United Nations Development Programme, which organized a conference paid for by the European Union (EU), to draft a five-year national development plan for 2018-2022.

Those efforts are aimed at achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The plan includes new concepts that enhance administrative decentralization, the promotion of the private sector, a focus on human capital and economic empowerment, as well as investment in education, health care and basic services. It also includes such elements as the empowerment of youth, women and vulnerable groups, the creation of job opportunities for the poorest, and supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises.

The people and the Government of Iraq appreciate the efforts of all of the countries that have participated in the international coalition, particularly the EU and the United States of America. We also thank other countries that did not participate in the coalition but which have actively participated in the war against the terrorist Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant by supporting us with logistical and military elements while maintaining full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

On 25 April 2017, in a clear and flagrant violation of our sovereignty, good neighbourliness, the rules of international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations, Turkish forces illegally entered Iraqi airspace and territory by bombarding the Mount Sinjar region of northern Iraq with more than 20 bombs, which led to the killing and wounding of members of the Peshmerga Iraqi forces. I would like to take this opportunity to request that the Council shoulder its legal and ethical responsibilities to prevent the recurrence of such violations, an action that would contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Council must demand that Turkey withdraw its forces from Iraqi territory and respect good neighbourliness in order to ensure international and regional peace and security. Such violations could lead to a complex regional situation, fuel tensions and cause instability. Similarly, Iraq urges other States to develop strict legal norms to combat foreign terrorist fighters, including criminalizing various acts by those terrorists in other States. Actions to be criminalized should include any intent to receive training by terrorist groups or travel abroad for terrorist purposes. Also important would be strict vetting and other immigration measures and the exchange of intelligence with countries of destination so as to curb the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, in implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

Iraq is studying the various options in the global campaign to bring Da'esh to justice. With our partners, we are looking into options for gathering and preserving evidence of crimes committed by the terrorist ISIL gangs. That will be done without prejudice to the jurisdiction and independence of our judiciary.

With respect to the IDP crisis in Iraq, friendly and brotherly States have contributed to rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in areas liberated from ISIL gangs. That is a factor that contributes to reducing the suffering of IDPs following the war against terror. In that context, I would like to express our appreciation for the assistance offered by the Japanese Government in funding the activities of the United Nations Office for Project Services in the Middle East. A project will be launched under the slogan "Improving the Impact and Effectiveness of Community Police in the Newly Liberated Areas in Iraq" in partnership with the Iraqi Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Iraq.

My country also values the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, as they work to provide support for IDPs. We urge other States to support the relevant programmes in Iraq as we undertake critical work in the humanitarian and relief areas for IDPs and in favour of community reconciliation.

The Government of Iraq is working continuously to enhance its relationship with brotherly States in the Arab world, in particular the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, Turkey and Iran, in addition to its ongoing relationship with the Syrian Government. Iraq looks forward to seeing unity in the Security Council with respect to a comprehensive solution to the conflict in Syria, in particular one that would meet the interests of all parties in that country and lead to ending the regional support for terrorist groups in Syria and completely defeat them.

The Government of Iraq is committed to making exceptional efforts in the area of the missing Kuwaiti national archives. The Iraqi Ministry of Defence continues to work on documenting and verifying witness accounts and conducting visits to alleged sites where Kuwaiti persons and prisoners went missing. We have resumed digging in section B of the Al-Khamisiyah site. As for Karbala, the Ministry of Defence has dug 102 holes without achieving tangible results. There are no new findings on the Al-Jahra and Radwaniyah sites. Excavation continues at the naval base sites in Kuwait, with the assistance of witnesses. The Ministries for Foreign Affairs and Defence continue their outreach work through television and other media outlets with a view to gathering accounts by new witnesses and documenting information in order to reach tangible and substantial information that could lead to finding out the locations of the missing Kuwaiti prisoners and persons.

In conclusion, we would like to express our appreciation for the work of the Special Representative, Mr. Ján Kubiš, and his team, as they continue to advise the Iraqi Government. We thank them for the efforts of UNAMI aimed at establishing a united, stable Iraq that is free from the scourge of terrorism.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.